

Avoiding Invasives in Home Landscaping, Part I: Common Landscape Invasives

It's so unfair! You open a mysterious envelope in your mail, only to discover a FINE for having purple loosestrife in your garden! You got the seedlings from a friend who had it in her garden. How were you supposed to know it was illegal to grow in Wisconsin??

Purple loosestrife is a plant that was brought here from Europe for its beautiful purple flowers. In its native habitat, it behaves itself very nicely, but here in Wisconsin, it's lacking any natural checks and balances. This invasive species can take over wetlands and river corridors in a number of years, quickly eliminating most native species, and rendering these habitats useless for the wildlife that once thrived there. For this reason, Wisconsin has placed it on the "Noxious Weed List," making it illegal to possess, sell or propagate.

Many of us have innocently planted species for their beauty in our gardens, not realizing that they were invasive species. It can take many years before an exotic species makes the leap from "garden plant" to "garden escape," but once they do, watch out! About 30% of invasive species in Wisconsin are, in fact, garden escapes. These species can escape to natural areas in a number of ways. Seeds can be dispersed by wind, water and animals. They reproduce prolifically, sometimes with seed capsules that burst explosively to disperse their seeds in all directions. Some may even send underground runners in all directions.

What can home landscapers do? Of the numerous invasive garden escapes in Wisconsin, only purple loosestrife is on the Noxious Weed List. It is up to you, therefore, to acknowledge the issue and seek information. See Tables 1-5 below for the more common invasives of home gardens. The next step is to eradicate the invasive species that are already on your property. This is not always easy! For information on identifying your garden's invasive inhabitants, and on how to get rid of them, see Table 6. Lastly, continue to cultivate your joy of gardening, but with species that are carefully selected to not be invasive. Why not consider planting native plants? See Part II of this series, "Go Native," for further information.

Table 1: Some Common Invasive Landscape Trees

Common Name	Scientific Name
Amur maple	<i>Acer ginnala</i>
Norway maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Tree of heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>
Russian olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>
Autumn olive	<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>
White mulberry	<i>Morus alba</i>
Common buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>
Glossy buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus frangula</i>
Siberian elm	<i>Ulmus pumila</i>

Table 2: Some Invasive Landscape Shrubs

Common Name	Scientific Name
Japanese barberry	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>
Burning bush	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>
Common privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Amur honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera maacki</i>
Tartarian honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>
Morrow's honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera morrowii</i>
Bella honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera X bella</i>
Wayfaring tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>
European highbush cranberry	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>

Table 3: Some Invasive Landscape Vines

Common Name	Scientific Name
Porcelain berry	<i>Ampelopsis brevipedunculata</i>
Round-leaved bittersweet	<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>
Wintercreeper	<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>
English ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Japanese honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica</i>
Periwinkle	<i>Vinca minor</i>
Black swallow wort	<i>Vincetoxicum nigrum</i>

Table 4: Some Invasive Landscape Forbs (Non-Woody Flowers/Herbs)

Common Name	Scientific Name
Bishop's goutweed	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Ox-eye daisy	<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>
Lily of the valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>
Queen Anne's lace	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Grecian foxglove	<i>Digitalis lanata</i>
Baby's breath	<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>
Orange day lily	<i>Hemerocallis fulva</i>
Dame's rocket	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>
Purple loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
Garden forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i>
Japanese knotweed	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>
Common tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>
Garden heliotrope	<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>

Table 5: Some Water Garden Invasives

Common Name	Scientific Name
Flowering rush	Butomus umbellatus
Yellow iris	Iris pseudacorus
Aquatic forget-me-not	Myosotis scorpioides
Eurasian water milfoil	Myriophyllum spicatum
Watercress	Nasturtium officinale
Curly-leaf pondweed	Potamogeton crispus
Water chestnut	Trapa natans

Table 6: Resources for Identifying and Eradicating Landscape Invasives

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bureau of Endangered Resources/Invasive Species

6th floor GEF-II

101 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7921

Madison, WI 53703

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/invasive/nonnative.htm>

Email: Bureau.EndangeredResources@dnr.state.wi.us

Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin

<http://www.ipaw.org>

Email: info@IPAW.org

Wisconsin State Herbarium

160 Birge Hall

430 Lincoln Drive

Madison, WI 53706

<http://www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/>